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EXAMINER

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**BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES**

Application Number: 10/624,223
Filing Date: July 22, 2003
Appellant(s): HODSON ET AL.

James A. Scheer
For Appellant

EXAMINER'S ANSWER

This is in response to the appeal brief filed 7/11/2008 appealing from the Office action mailed 10/11/2007.

(1) Real Party in Interest

A statement identifying by name the real party in interest is contained in the brief.

(2) Related Appeals and Interferences

The examiner is not aware of any related appeals, interferences, or judicial proceedings which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

(3) Status of Claims

The statement of the status of claims contained in the brief is correct.

(4) Status of Amendments After Final

The appellant's statement of the status of amendments after final rejection contained in the brief is correct.

(5) Summary of Claimed Subject Matter

The summary of claimed subject matter contained in the brief is correct.

(6) Grounds of Rejection to be Reviewed on Appeal

The appellant's statement of the grounds of rejection to be reviewed on appeal is correct.

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(7) Claims Appendix

The copy of the appealed claims contained in the Appendix to the brief is correct.

(8) Evidence Relied Upon

6,724,887	EILBACHER ET AL.	4-2004
6,895,438	ULRICH	5-2005
6,356,663	ARMSTRONG	3-2002
5,621,789	MCCALMONT ET AL.	4-1997

Jackson, Kathryn E. "Handling E-mail in a Customer-Centric Organization."

<http://www.callcentermagazine.com/shared/article/showArticle.jhtml?articleId=17600147>

3/1/2000. 8 pages.

(9) Grounds of Rejection

The following ground(s) of rejection are applicable to the appealed claims:

9a. Claims 1-2, 4-5, 7-9, 13-14, 16-17, 20-21, 23, 25-26, and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eilbacher et al (U.S. Patent 6,724,887), hereafter "Eilbacher," in view of Jackson ("Handling E-mail in a Customer-Centric Organization").

As to claim 1, Eilbacher teaches the claimed subject matter including:

Compiling performance reports (col. 10, ll. 50-62) in a contact center (fig. 5, #201) serving a plurality of clients (fig. 3, #100) using a plurality of agents (fig. 3, #104);

Opening a transaction file (col. 10, ll. 28-44) for saving information about exchanges (col. 6, ll. 1-8) between an agent of the plurality of agents and a client of the plurality of clients;

Measuring indicia of activity for asynchronous Internet transactions (e.g., satisfactory or unsatisfactory experience, col. 12, ll. 54-55, or various captured data, col. 10, ll. 27-44, including email communications, fig. 5, #202) for the exchanges between the agent and client.

Adding the measured indicia of activity to the transaction file (col. 12, ll. 54-64, col. 11, ll. 50-54, col. 10, ll. 27-61); and

Compiling a report based upon the transaction file (col. 9, ll. 57-67, col. 12, ll. 54-64).

As to the teaching of asynchronous transactions, see fig. 5, #202 and related description). An email transaction is asynchronous because it is an intermittent transaction in which data is created and then transmitted, consistent with the description in Applicant's specification (p. 10).

Eilbacher does not expressly teach an effort value, which represents effective effort to respond to each transmission within each transaction.

However, Eilbacher further discloses that communication can include e-mails and phone conversations between agent and client (fig. 5, col. 6, ll. 1-7). Many types of communications are analyzed (fig. 7). As discussed above, e-mails are asynchronous.

Furthermore, Jackson discloses an effort value that represents effective effort to respond to a transmission within a transaction ("e-mail response time", p. 6).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher, such that e-mail conversations are processed/analyzed like phone conversations, and conversations are additionally analyzed in the manner disclosed by Jackson in which an effort value is recorded with email communications between agent and client. The effort value would thus reflect effective effort associated with the transaction, as claimed. The motivation would be to provide a service level standard, as taught by Jackson (p. 6).

As to claim 2, Eilbacher as applied above further teaches wherein the step of opening the transaction file further comprises detecting an initial contact between the agent and the client (e.g., caller initiated transaction, col. 9, ll. 10-20), and tagging subsequent transmissions as belonging to the transaction (col. 9, l. 10-50). Note that the tagging has to occur or else the system would not know what communications to group together into a customer experience (col. 9-10).

As to claim 4, Eilbacher as applied above further teaches wherein the step of measuring the indicia of activity further comprises counting a number of exchanges between the agent and the client (e.g., number of conversations or number of transfers, col. 10, ll. 13-17).

Eilbacher and Jackson do not expressly teach, "to close a sale."

However, Eilbacher teaches counting the number of exchanges in "cradle-to-grave" transactions (col. 10, ll. 4-17). "Cradle-to-grave" transactions can end when the agent completes a transaction (col. 9, l. 18). Since Eilbacher is drawn to customers of a

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call center, the transactions may be sale transactions (col. 1, l. 64, col. 2, l. 54, col. 7, l. 65).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that the agent's transactions are sales transactions. Therefore, when the agent completes a transaction, the agent closes a sale, which meets the claimed subject matter. The motivation would have been to use Eilbacher in a sales environment, as known to one of ordinary skill in the art.

As to claim 5, Eilbacher as applied above further teaches wherein the exchanges comprise email (see fig. 5 and related text).

As to claim 7, Eilbacher and Jackson as applied above do not expressly teach how much time has elapsed between successive transmissions of each asynchronous transaction.

However, Eilbacher teaches a "wait time" col. 6, ll. 35-40 and measuring the amount of time a customer is on hold (see description for figs. 2-3). The time on hold can be an elapsed time between successive communications. Eilbacher also teaches recording start/end times for communication, and states that all data associated with customer-agent communication can be recorded (col. 8, ll. 50-65).

Since e-mail conversations are treated like phone conversations as discussed above, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that elapsed time between successive transmissions of email transactions are determined and recorded. The

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motivation would have been to facilitate customer experience analysis, taught by Eilbacher (col. 11, col. 6, ll. 35-40).

As to claims 8 and 9, Eilbacher as applied above further teaches segregating exchanges between the agent and client from other exchanges between other agents and other clients (Eilbacher, col. 10, ll. 36-44), and from other exchanges between the agent and the client (using a time stamp for an exchange between agent and client, col. 10, l. 37), further comprising correlating an identifier of the agent and client with the transaction file (i.e., customer and agent identification, col. 10, ll. 36-37). Since every transaction is marked by a time stamp, agent name, customer name, etc., each exchange is segregated from other exchanges between agents and other clients, as well as the agent and the client, because the other transactions are marked with different time stamps, agent names, and customer names.

Claims 13-14, 16-17, 20-21, 23, 25, and 28 are rejected based on the same reasoning as the above claims.

As to claim 26, Eilbacher as applied above further teaches "selection processor...initial contact" as seen in claim 2 above, and determining a type for each transaction, and attaching a time stamp to each transmission within a transaction (col. 10, ll. 27-45).

9b. Claims 3, 10, 15, 19, 22, 24, 27, and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eilbacher in view of Jackson, further in view of Ulrich (U.S. Patent 6,895,438).

As to claim 3, Eilbacher and Jackson as applied above teach identifying a prior contact of an agent involving the client (Eilbacher, col. 13, ll. 1-40, col. 5, ll. 22-25).

Contacts of an agent are stored in a database (Eilbacher, col. 10, ll. 27-44).

Eilbacher and Jackson do not expressly teach wherein a prior contact list of the agent is searched to identify prior contacts, or wherein the searching is performed when the initial contact is detected between the agent and client.

However, Eilbacher teaches detecting initial contact (using cradle to grave recording, col. 9, ll. 14-20), and storing the agent's communications in a database (col. 10, ll. 28-44). The database stores the customer and the agent (col. 10, ll. 36-39), and marks unsatisfactory communications (col. 11, ll. 51-53).

Furthermore, Ulrich discloses a contact list (fig. 3A-3B).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that unsatisfactory contacts with customers (Eilbacher, col. 11, ll. 51-53) are stored in the list. The motivation would have been to facilitate knowing if the agent had a previous conversation(s) with the customer (by searching a smaller list, instead of potentially the entire customer database), and to inform the agent when contact is established that he/she is speaking to a customer with a previous unsatisfactory experience, as taught by Eilbacher (col. 5, ll. 22-25).

As to claim 10, Eilbacher and Jackson do not expressly teach wherein correlating an identifier of the agent and client with the transaction file further comprises

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matching e-mail addresses of the agent and client to e-mail addresses within the transaction file.

However, Ulrich teaches wherein correlating an identifier of the agent and client with the transaction file further comprises matching e-mail addresses of the agent and client to e-mail addresses within the transaction file (see fig. 3).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that the above claimed subject matter is implemented. The motivation would have been to facilitate organization of data, as known to one of ordinary skill in the art.

As to claim 19, Eilbacher and Jackson do not expressly teach wherein word content of each exchange is used to determine whether different transactions are part of one or different transactions.

However, Ulrich teaches wherein word content of each exchange is used to determine whether different transmissions are part of one transaction or different transactions (see fig. 3, col. 7, ll. 45-55).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that word content is used as claimed. The motivation would have been to facilitate organization of data, as known to one of ordinary skill in the art.

As to claim 24, Eilbacher and Jackson do not expressly teach correlating a subject matter identifier field of the exchanges with a subject matter identifier of the transaction file.

However, Ulrich teaches correlating a subject matter identifier field of the exchanges with a subject matter identifier of the transaction file (see fig. 3).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that the above correlation is accomplished. The motivation would have been to facilitate organizing data, as known to one of ordinary skill in the art.

As to claim 29, Eilbacher and Jackson teach an effort value, as discussed above, but do not expressly teach using proportionality to calculate an equivalent time of effort.

However, Ulrich teaches wherein an effort value is determined using proportionality to calculate an equivalent time of effort (e.g., col. 7, l. 35 – col. 8, l. 67, col. 10, l. 13 – l. 49). This equivalent time of effort is an equivalent time from the reader's perspective.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that an equivalent time of effort is additionally calculated. The motivation would have been to provide a heuristic measure of who and what is consuming time and whether those demands on time are line with organizational priorities, as taught by Ulrich (col. 10, ll. 46-50).

Claims 15, 22, and 27 are rejected based on the same reasoning as the above claims.

9c. Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eilbacher in view of Jackson, further in view of Armstrong (U.S. Patent 6,356,633).

As to claim 6, Eilbacher and Jackson do not expressly teach wherein the indicia of activity comprises an average time between messages of transactions for each agent.

However, Armstrong discloses an average time between messages of transactions for each agent (col. 10, ll. 4-11).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that an average time between messages is recorded. The motivation would have been to provide statistic and reports for e-mail messages, as taught by Armstrong (col. 9, l. 64 – col. 10, l. 4).

9d. Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eilbacher in view of Jackson, further in view of McCalmont et al (U.S. Patent 5,621,789), hereafter “McCalmont.”

As to claim 11, Eilbacher and Jackson teach completed transactions, as discussed above, but do not expressly teach determining and displaying a total effort value between the agent and client and determining in real time an ongoing transaction total effort value for ongoing transactions.

However, Jackson teaches or suggests an ongoing email transaction because “the company would be more likely to retain customers if agents kept [the customers] in the loop even if [the agents] couldn’t resolve [customer] problems right away” (p. 6).

McCalmont displays a total effort between agent and client in real time (fig. 5b).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that real time statistics on total ongoing transaction effort between the agent and client are displayed. The motivation would have been to indicate to the user the efficiency of his work, as taught by McCalmont (col. 6, ll. 62-64).

9e. Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eilbacher in view of Jackson, further in view of McCalmont, further in view of Ulrich.

As to claim 12, Eilbacher, Jackson, and McCalmont do not expressly teach correlating a subject matter identifier field of the exchanges with a subject matter identifier of the transaction file.

However, Ulrich teaches correlating a subject matter identifier field of the exchanges with a subject matter identifier of the transaction file (see fig. 3).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Eilbacher, Jackson, and McCalmont, such that the above correlation is accomplished. The motivation would have been to facilitate organizing message data, as known to one of ordinary skill in the art.

9f. Claims 18 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eilbacher in view of Jackson, further in view of Ichbiah (U.S. Patent 5,623,406).

As to claims 18 and 30, Eilbacher and Jackson as applied above teach an effort value, as discussed above, but do not expressly teach wherein the effort value is

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determined based upon how long a transmission would have required had it been spoken, or based on the character length of the transmission.

However, Jackson teaches that e-mail response time is as important as telephone response time (p. 6). Telephone responses can be spoken, and e-mail responses can be typed. Ichbiah states that normal speech is about 100 words per minute, and a skilled typist can be expected to type at 40-70 words per minute (col. 1, ll. 20-25). Typing at a certain number of words per minute is based on character length, since typed words have characters.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to further modify Eilbacher and Jackson, such that the email response time (effort value) is based on how long the email would have taken if it were spoken, or based on how long the email would have taken if it was typed by a skilled typist [e.g., 70 words (characters) per minute]. The motivation would have to apply a uniform performance standard for email agents, as known to one of ordinary skill in the art. For example, a call center might want to assume that typing an email deserves the same amount of response time as speaking. Other call centers might want to account for the fact that typing is slower than speaking.

New Ground of Rejection

9g. Claims 1-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 for being directed to non-statutory subject matter.

As to claim 1, the claimed method is understood to be a method of purely mental steps, which is not statutory. A 101 process must (1) be tied to another statutory class (such as a particular apparatus) or (2) transform underlying subject matter to a different state or thing. Neither of these criteria is met. Specifically, the claim is not tied to any particular apparatus, and since the claim merely opens a file, measures activity, adds the measured activity to the file, and compiles a report based on the file, the claim does not transform underlying subject matter to a different state or thing. The claim should positively identify the other statutory class to which it is tied, or positively recite the subject matter that is being transformed. See *In re Bilski* and *In re Comiskey*.

Claims 2-12 depend from claim 1 and are rejected based on the same reasons as claim 1.

(10) Response to Argument

1. Claims 1, 13, 25, and their dependent claims; Eilbacher in view of Jackson

Appellant argues that Jackson's "response time" is not a measure of effort to respond since it would include delays, and thus, Jackson's "response time" is unrelated to the claimed "effort value" (Brief, p. 7, 9th line from bottom). The examiner respectfully disagrees.

Appellant argues that the claimed "effort" is "the effort needed to respond to a message which includes reading, evaluating, and preparing a reply such as an e-mail (see e.g., specification, pp. 12-13), not the time between transmission of the initiating email by the customer and the receipt of a response from the agent" (Emphasis Added,

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see Brief, p. 7, 2 lines from bottom). However, this language is not recited in the claims, and Appellant is clearly relying on limitations from the specification. The broadest reasonable interpretation in light of the specification is applied to the claims, but limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

In this case, the claimed “effort value” is understood to be any measure of effort to respond. The claim does not require that the “effort value” not include delays, and also does not require that “effort” be limited to only the agent’s effort in reading, evaluating, and preparing a reply.

Thus, Jackson’s “time to respond to an e-mail” meets the claimed “effort value” because the time to respond is a measure of effective effort to respond to a message. In other words, the time it takes to respond to an e-mail reflects the overall effort to respond to an e-mail.

Appellant further argues that Jackson’s “e-mail response time” includes various delays, such as delays before opening the e-mail and delays in beginning to prepare a response (Brief, p. 7, 7th line from bottom). However, it should be noted that Jackson does not actually state that the “e-mail response time” includes these various delays. For the sake of argument, even if Jackson’s email response time did include delays, Jackson would still teach or suggest the claimed subject matter. The mentioned delays would suggest that the agent is not putting forth effort to respond to the client e-mail, and thus, the delays would still be a measure of effort (or lack thereof). For example, an agent delaying to open a client e-mail and delaying to begin to prepare a response

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suggests that the agent is procrastinating, and thus indicates a lack of effort. The claims do not require that "effort to respond" be measured in any particular way.

Therefore, even if Jackson's e-mail response time included delays, Jackson would still teach or suggest the claimed "effort value."

Also for the sake of argument, Eilbacher, the primary reference, teaches indicating whether a customer's experience was satisfactory or unsatisfactory (col. 12, ll. 54-55). This may also suggest an indication of effort because an agent should strive for a good customer experience. However, to be more explicit in meeting the claimed "effort value," the examiner relies on Jackson, the secondary reference. See above discussion.

As such, the prior art teaches or suggests the claimed subject matter, and the rejection of claims 1, 13, 25, and their dependent claims should be sustained.

2. Claims 4 and 16, Eilbacher in view of Jackson

Appellant argues that Eilbacher does not teach "counting the number of exchanges between the agent and the client" (Brief, p. 8, section "b"). The examiner respectfully disagrees.

Eilbacher teaches, "All of the interactions during the call are recorded, including...time spent on hold, [and] number of transfers and conversations with an agent. These types of recordings allow for evaluation of the full customer experience...." (Emphasis Added, col. 10, 13-18). Since Eilbacher records the number

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of transfers and conversations with an agent, Eilbacher counts the number of exchanges between the agent and client, as claimed.

As such, the prior art teaches or suggests the claimed subject matter, and the rejection of claims 4 and 16 should be sustained.

(11) Related Proceeding(s) Appendix

No decision rendered by a court or the Board is identified by the examiner in the Related Appeals and Interferences section of this examiner's answer.

For the above reasons, it is believed that the rejections should be sustained.

This examiner's answer contains a new ground of rejection set forth in section (9) above. Accordingly, appellant must within **TWO MONTHS** from the date of this answer exercise one of the following two options to avoid *sua sponte* **dismissal of the appeal** as to the claims subject to the new ground of rejection:

(1) **Reopen prosecution.** Request that prosecution be reopened before the primary examiner by filing a reply under 37 CFR 1.111 with or without amendment, affidavit or other evidence. Any amendment, affidavit or other evidence must be relevant to the new grounds of rejection. A request that complies with 37 CFR 41.39(b)(1) will be entered and considered. Any request that prosecution be reopened will be treated as a request to withdraw the appeal.

(2) **Maintain appeal.** Request that the appeal be maintained by filing a reply brief as set forth in 37 CFR 41.41. Such a reply brief must address each new ground of rejection as set forth in 37 CFR 41.37(c)(1)(vii) and should be in compliance with the other requirements of 37 CFR 41.37(c). If a reply brief filed pursuant to 37 CFR 41.39(b)(2) is accompanied by any amendment, affidavit or other evidence, it shall be treated as a request that prosecution be reopened before the primary examiner under 37 CFR 41.39(b)(1).

Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are not applicable to the TWO MONTH time period set forth above. See 37 CFR 1.136(b) for extensions of time to reply for patent applications and 37 CFR 1.550(c) for extensions of time to reply for ex parte reexamination proceedings.

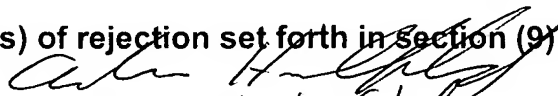
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Respectfully submitted,

/Charles E Lu/

Examiner, Art Unit 2161

A Technology Center Director or designee must personally approve the new ground(s) of rejection set forth in Section (9) above by signing below:


Andrew Hirshfeld
Director TC 2100

Conferees:

/Apu M Mofiz/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 2161

/Eddie C. Lee/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, TC 2100